

Women's March

I have not been to the Women's March after Trump's election. I thought that I was too 'smart' and busy for such events. Half a year spent at the oldest Buddhist monastery in the Himalayas converted me into the perfect follower of the Buddhist philosophy. I thought that everything was good – the sun that rises and the sun that goes down. My God, he is only going to be the president for 4 years and then never again. What is 4 years compared to 17 years of Putin's presidency!

Also, I could not understand women's resistance or LGBTQ's resistance in the US. In Scandinavia where I have spent the last 10 years, if a woman is invited by a man for tea she is invited just for the tea. And the question about human sexuality in Scandinavia reminded me of the question about food preferences. "Do you prefer fish or chicken?"... "oh, I am vegetarian, so I prefer fish", or - "I prefer chicken ", or - "I like them both." In Scandinavia you don't even need "to come out". Who cares! Everybody knows that homosexuality has been recorded not only in the antique chronicles but in 1. 500 species so far.

Of course, I had my Russian past as well. Sometimes I remembered the director of the art college who squeezed my breast evaluating my works of art. Then he was evaluating the artworks of other female students in the same way. But it was actually something that women there never tried to resist, and I was not an exception.

It happened in Atlanta during my business trip, a couple of months after the Women's March. As soon as we got into the taxi with my colleague, the huge driver who was a native Haitien asked us where we were from. We replied that we were from NC. He specifically asked me again. I repeated that I am from Charlotte. He said that he liked my sweet accent and lie, but he meant my native language. Grudgingly I said that I was Russian. It was difficult to predict his reaction. We had had a 20 min ride already and entire time he kept talking without a single break. He started his monologue with Russian president who was such a "f... up guy", "a dictator ", "the same as Saddam and Mao". Then there was a philosophical monologue about peace all over the world without dictators, during which he constantly lifted his hands from the steering wheel (not so fun - we were on the interstate). But it was just the beginning. Suddenly he asked me if I was married. Then about the wife of the Russian president and his children. Later he switched to the American president and his wife who liked to give him different types of pleasure because she was "Russian " too. Finally, the driver asked me directly if I wanted to give him such pleasures as well.

"Please, ask him to stop the car. I can't listen to it anymore!" Jane whispered to me. She was my American colleague. 12 years younger than me.

I still tried to ignore him. But his imagination was just flourishing. "I am also looking for a Russian wife who would wait for me at home after the working day and would feed me with fish putting its directly into my mouth." He kept imagining.

I tried to cool myself down thinking, well, maybe it was just an ancient Haitian tradition. I probably had to read more.

Jane kept whispering into my ear. "Stop him! You are in America! Be liberated! If you don't stop him, I will stop and report him!" Jane's voice was getting louder. I looked at her and saw her face that had turned completely red.

I did not know what the last trigger had been. Either the noise from both sides, the driver's enduring fantasy, crazy traffic or my colleague – an American millennial who apparently was braver than me. But unexpectedly for myself I just burst out: "Listen, if you don't stop the car immediately I will report you for harassment! ", I shouted. I don't remember exactly what I said. Suddenly, the memory of five years of the "evaluation of my artworks" at the art college and thoughts that the same director is still in charge of it occupied my mind. I had never shouted like that before.

"I am sorry." The driver answered at last and his wide shoulders shrank in uneasiness. "Please let me take you to the station because you will miss the train if I stop now. "

He dropped us off at the station.

"You do not need to pay me and I am sorry again." He said.

But Jane paid him.

On the train, I was resting my head on her shoulder.

"How are you feeling?" She asked me.

"How am I feeling? Well, I feel like I got my broken hand working back again."

"I will bring you coffee."

On our way back, I did not sleep in the Amtrak during the night. Sipping coffee and looking out the dark window I was recapitulating my life story where I could not find any signs of resistance until this day. I came to Scandinavia when everything was done there already, without me being involved in the women's rights resistance and I took it for granted. I left Russia where it was the norm to just ignore the attitude to women as to sexual targets. At that time, I was too young and I never fought against it. The United States became the first country where I learned to say "no", and where I got enough rights and enough support to say "no". I still have not had a chance to take part in the Women's March or any other marchers. But...

And this "but" changes my entire life.